



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

Policy #18

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Introduction

An effective comments and complaints policy is a crucial part of promoting quality childcare. Although complaints are difficult to receive and respond to, acting on a complaint promptly can help upgrade service quality.

Even where every effort is made to meet quality standards, those who use a childcare service may not, at times, feel satisfied with the type, level or quality of the service that is provided.

The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- Anyone who comes into contact with the service will be assured that if they ever have a comment to make or need to make a complaint it will be welcomed and responded to appropriately.
- Parents/carers are informed about the Comments and Complaints Policy and procedure at *registration/enrolment*.
- All staff members are aware that if they receive a complaint there is a specific procedure in place for dealing with it.
- Complaints are taken seriously and resolved efficiently and effectively.

Policy Statement

Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori is committed to providing a quality service to children and their parents/carers and we regularly evaluate our services in order to measure the standard of our performance.

While this is always our aim, we accept that sometimes things do not always go to plan. In such circumstances, we want to know so that we can put the problems right and learn from our mistakes.

We welcome all comments on our services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori gives a commitment to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. All complaints will be dealt with seriously and sensitively to ensure that the standard of service provided by [*name of service*] is maintained at a high level.

The procedure will be kept as simple as possible.

Every effort will be made to address the issue informally before moving to a formal procedure



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

Under normal circumstances, the Manager will be responsible for managing formal complaints.

Where a complaint concerns a staff member, *[name the service]* will address the situation with due regard to its obligations as an employer and the rights of the employees, the terms governing their conditions of employment and the procedures outlined in the staff handbook.

All complaints made to staff – both formal and informal – will be recorded in detail in the complaint book and the manager will be informed immediately.

The complaint will be investigated and a written response will be sent within 14 working days. We will always respect confidentiality.

If a complaint is made against the Manager, an owner will conduct the investigation.

In the event of errors being made, *Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori* will endeavour to correct them as quickly as possible and to give an explanation and, where appropriate, an apology.

The evaluation of the outcome of the complaint will form one of the considerations for future policy and practice.

Any parent/carer can, at any time, ask for access to our complaints file.

Procedures & Practices

How a complaint is received

As outlined in the Parent/Carer Involvement Policy, *Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori* is committed to open and regular communication with parents/carers. We welcome all comments on our services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

A complaint can come to the attention of the service in a number of different ways:

- Contact, by phone or in person, with a staff member or by letter, email, and/or text.
- The complaint may be made by the person directly affected or by a person acting on their behalf.

Stage One

If a person has a complaint about some aspect of the service's activity, or about the conduct of an individual member of staff, it will often be possible to resolve the problem by simply speaking to the individual concerned and/or to the Manager.

Some complaints may fall more into the category of disagreements or differences of opinion, and may be resolved through discussion and compromise on the part of both the person making the complaint and the staff member.



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

In the first instance, those who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to speak directly to the relevant member of staff. If they do not want to do this, they can speak with the Manager who will try to resolve the problem.

The details of the complaint and the response will be recorded.

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, then Stage Two of the procedure will formally come into operation.

Stage Two

If informal discussions of a complaint or problem have not produced a satisfactory resolution to the situation, those making the complaint should put their complaint in detail, and if possible in writing, to the Manager using the form attached to this policy. All necessary support will be provided. Relevant names, dates and any other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included.

The manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as possible – within three working days at least – and fully investigate the matter within 15 working days. If there is any delay, those who made the complaint will be advised of this and offered an explanation. The Manager will be responsible for sending them a full and formal written response to their complaint.

The Manager, with the assistance of appropriate staff members, will carry out a full investigation. This may involve:

- Interviews with all relevant individuals
- Minute taking of all meetings
- Individuals being informed that they may have an appropriate individual present with them during the investigation.

The Manager will also inform the Owner/Chairperson that the investigation is taking place.

If the Manager has good reason to believe that the situation has child protection implications, they should inform the designated Child Protection Officer and ensure that the local HSE is contacted, according to the procedure set out in the Child Protection Policy. If any party involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed they should contact An Garda Síochána.

The formal response to the complaint from Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori will be sent to the person who made the complaint and copied to all relevant members of staff if appropriate. The response will include recommendations for dealing with the complaint and any amendments to the service's policies or procedures emerging from the investigation.

The Manager will arrange a time to meet the person who made the complaint and any other relevant individuals, such as members of staff, to discuss the complaint and the service's response to it. The Manager will judge if it is best for all parties to meet together or if individual meetings are more appropriate.

If at the conclusion of this process those who made a complaint are dissatisfied with the response they have received, the original complaint along with the service's response will be passed to the owner.



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

The owner will communicate a detailed response, including any actions to be taken, to both the Manager and the person who made the complaint within 15 working days.

Making a Complaint to the HSE

If the situation is still unresolved, the person who made the complaint will be informed of their right to make a formal complaint to the HSE. If they would like to make a formal complaint to the HSE, the form is filled out and they are informed about where to send it.

Communication Plan

All parents/carers are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Comments and Complaints on registration. Staff members will check with parents that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the parent/carer handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with staff at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents in the Policy Folder located in the main office.

Parents/carers may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/carers and staff will receive written notification of any updates.

Review Date

Date:

Name:

Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Confidentiality/Information Sharing Policy
- Records and Record Keeping Policy
- Grievance and Discipline Policy and Procedures
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Communication Policy
- Staff Development and Training Policy
- Comments and Complaints Form (*see sample form attached*)

References/Supporting documents/Related Legislation

- **Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2006**
- **Síolta – The National Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Education**
- **Supporting Quality: guidelines for professional practice in early childhood services (3rd edition)** by Geraldine French. Barnardos' Training and Resource Service, 2008



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

Contact Information:

Name:

Policy Created

Date:

Review Date

Date:

Signatures

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

Appendix A

SERIOUS COMPLAINTS

The following are examples of serious complaints (this list is not exhaustive) which will require a formal response and cannot be dealt with only through informal discussion:

Violation of Children's Rights

- Child abuse (physical or sexual)
- Use of corporal punishment
- Unacceptable disciplinary techniques, e.g. shaming, humiliation, withholding food or toileting privileges, locking child in closet/bathroom

Health and Safety Violations

- Gross unsanitary practices/conditions, e.g. presence of faeces/urine, improper food handling, lack of hand washing before and after food handling/nappy changing
- Broken/shattered glass or other sharp objects
- Poisonous plants/household chemicals where children can access them
- Complaints alleging that children have been left alone or in the care of person(s) who have not been Garda vetted
- Numbers of children over the required ratio
- Presence of medications unlocked and accessible by children
- Presence of seriously damaged/broken toys or equipment
- Presence of illegal drugs/staff member intoxicated

Discrimination

- Any action (written or verbal) alleging discrimination regarding a child and/or family based on: gender, race, religion, colour, national origin, age, ability, disability, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status, parents' marital status, membership of the Traveller community

Allegations of Fraud

- Any attempt to falsify records